



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

AUG 25 2016

OFFICE OF CHEMICAL SAFETY
AND POLLUTION PREVENTION

The Honorable Earl Blumenauer
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Blumenauer:

Thank you for your letter dated June 24, 2016 to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in support of the EPA's recently released draft biological evaluations. We appreciate your knowledge about our obligations under the Endangered Species Act as well as our recent efforts to assess pesticide risk across the entire country for chlorpyrifos, diazinon, and malathion. Based on recommendations from the 2013 National Academy of Sciences' report "Assessing Risks to Endangered and Threatened Species from Pesticides," the EPA has been working closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service (collectively referred to as the Services) to develop the interim scientific methods used in the draft biological evaluations.

During the 60-day comment period on the draft biological evaluations, we received over 78,600 comments, with about 120 substantive comments meriting detailed review. We are currently reviewing these comments as well as recommendations from a 2-day workshop with external stakeholders held at the end of June. We expect to finalize the biological evaluations for the three pilot chemicals by December 2016.

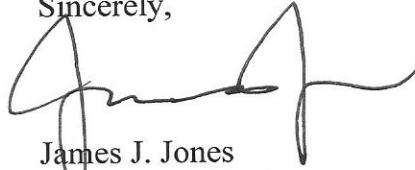
For those species and designated critical habitats where registered uses of the pesticides are "likely to adversely affect" species and/or habitat in the finalized biological evaluations, the Services will use the analyses and data from the biological evaluations in their final biological opinions for each of the three chemicals. The biological opinions of the Services will also have a public comment period before they become final. The Services have agreed to complete final biological opinions for chlorpyrifos, malathion and diazinon by December 2017. At any time during this consultation process with the Services, the EPA can determine if a pesticide's registration, label, or use instructions should be altered to ensure use of a pesticide is consistent with the requirements of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act and the ESA.

Since receiving the NAS report in 2013, the EPA and our partner agencies have been working together to develop shared scientific approaches that reflect the advice provided by the NAS. We have developed and continue to refine interim approaches to jointly implement the NAS report recommendations as part of a phased iterative process. Once these approaches have been fully vetted through the pilot biological evaluations and the Services' biological opinions, the agencies intend to apply these methods to chemicals undergoing the EPA's registration review process.

I want to reassure you that the EPA will continue to work closely with our federal partners to streamline the process for evaluating the effects of pesticides on endangered and threatened species and their habitats. We have made tremendous strides in improving the consultation process. We are committed to this important work and appreciate your support.

Again, thank you for your letter. If you have further questions, please contact me, or your staff may contact Sven-Erik Kaiser in the EPA's Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations at kaiser.sven-erik@epa.gov or (202) 566-2753.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James J. Jones', with a stylized, flowing script.

James J. Jones
Assistant Administrator